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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAO](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: TAJIK GOVT DELAYS PUBLICATION OF OPPOSITION PAPER

REF: A) 05 Dushanbe 1127 B) 05 Dushanbe 1172

11. A local Dushanbe court has dragged its feet reviewing Mukhtor Boqizoda's case, thereby further preventing the publication of Boqizoda's "Neru-i Sukhan," an independent newspaper critical of President Rahmonov's administration and perceived by the government as "opposition." The government shut down his newspaper in January 2005. In July Boqizoda was allowed to resume printing for one week, and then shut down again. In August, a Dushanbe court found Boqizoda guilty of stealing electricity from an electric company (reftels). After an investigation cleared Boqizoda, the Supreme Court reviewed his case and decided February 10 that the local court's ruling was invalid. The Supreme Court instructed the local court to revise its decision, which would allow Boqizoda's newspaper to resume printing. The court was instructed to review the case and make a decision on February 24, but Boqizoda told PolOff February 27 the court had not made a decision yet.

12. According to Boqizoda, a group of tax inspectors climbed over the wall of his printing house and raided his offices January 26, 2005, while he was out of the country. The inspectors accused him of operating a press without a license, proper registration, or charter. After Boqizoda produced all necessary documents, the police charged him with illegal use of electricity, claiming he stole electricity from street wires. When that charge also was proved wrong, they accused him of stealing electricity from his neighbor. That allegation, too, was disproved, and so authorities charged him with stealing electricity from the electric company, and in August a Dushanbe court sentenced him to two years in a correctional facility. (COMMENT: This conviction caused somewhat of a stir, in that it was the first time someone was sentenced to jail for a violation that normally garnered an administrative fine. END COMMENT.) After an investigation, the electric company confirmed that Boqizoda did not steal electricity from it.

¶3. "Neru-i Sukhan's" articles and editorials critical of Rahmonov, Rahmonov's family, and other government officials made Boqizoda many enemies. After publishing an article on Minister of Foreign Affairs Talbak Nazarov, criticizing him as too old for the job, Nazarov invited Boqizoda's close friends in for a talk, hoping they would convince Boqizoda to stop publishing disparaging comments. Boqizoda also accused a professor and close friend of Mahmadnazar Solehov, Chief of the President's Administration, of accepting bribes from students.

¶4. Boqizoda told PolOff that he wrote a letter to President Rahmonov appealing for help, but has not received a response. He is determined to resume printing "Neru-i Sukhan" once the local court corrects its decision. Boqizoda is also awaiting the arrival of a printing press from the Eurasia Foundation, which may not be put into use until after the November presidential election. In addition, he is planning to publish a magazine. He has been unemployed since the government shut down his publishing house in 2005 and is in financial debt.

¶5. COMMENT: The Supreme Court would not likely have made its decision without prior approval from the President's office. Rahmonov may be loosening the chokehold on opposition press prior to the November presidential election -- slightly. However, the local court may not make its decision until the end of the year. Even if the court allowed Boqizoda to resume printing prior to November, it is likely authorities would find another excuse to block his publications. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND